

western Palaearctic, I do not believe that Meadow Pipits habitually migrate in juvenile plumage or in a state of advanced moult, and all examples of *A. p. pratensis* which I have collected from immigrant flocks in the British Isles had completed the autumnal moult.

Lastly, surely it is incorrect to claim that the valid racial characters of *A. p. whistleri* were not revised and adequately defined and discussed in advance of the publication of *A. p. theresae* Meinertzhagen, 1953, because such can be found in my note in *Bull. B.O.C.*, vol. lxxviii, 1948, pp. 54-56.

Birds perching on Hippopotamus

by CHARLES R. S. PITMAN

Received 26th January, 1961

Benson has shown me his note on this subject, to which I can add various records of observations made in Uganda.

In those parts of the Kazinga Channel (between Lakes George and Edward, in Western Uganda) where there are concentrations of waterfowl, it is commonplace and of daily occurrence to see African Darters, *Anhinga rufa* perched on hippos. Often two birds can be seen on the same animal, and once I have seen three. In Bayard Read's beautiful colour film *Birds of East and Central Africa* there is a delightful 'shot' of a hippo slowly submerging, with a Darter on its back.

Other birds seen perched on hippos in the same region include the Reed Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax africanus* and the Common Sandpiper, *Tringa hypoleucos*.

In the Nile, between Lake Albert and the Murchison Falls I have often seen Darters, Reed-Cormorants and Common Sandpipers respectively perched on hippos; on several occasions the African Pied Wagtail, *Motacilla aguimp* and once a Yellow Wagtail, *Budytes flavus*; more than once the Cattle Egret, *Ardeola ibis*; occasionally the Pied Kingfisher, *Ceryle rudis*; and once a Sacred Ibis, *Threskiornis aethiopicus*.

A short way downstream of the Murchison Falls I have several times observed White-collared Pratincoles, *Glareola nuchalis* on hippos, sometimes a single bird, but more usually two.

In Lake Victoria I have occasionally seen White-winged Black Terns, *Chlidonias leucoptera*, one or more, on the almost submerged back of a hippo.

I also recollect the report of a few White-faced Tree Ducks, *Dendrocygna vidua* perched on a hippo; but the strangest record is of three Egyptian Geese, *Alopochen aegyptiacus* settled on one of these 'floating islands'.

Various waders, other than the Common Sandpiper, have from time to time been observed perched on hippos.

Unusual nesting behaviour of the House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus* (L.)

by CHARLES R. S. PITMAN

Received 1st June, 1961

On 10th May, 1961, at Bournemouth, I watched a House Sparrow excavating a nest hole. Such unusual behaviour is worth recording. The site chosen was a crevice between two large stones which formed part of

the vertical facing of the Bourne Brook which flows through ornamental gardens.

The ♀ did all the work and was seen to enter the hole for 10 to 15 second periods, emerging each time with her beak full of mud which she deposited on top of the low brook wall (level with the grass lawn) on the opposite side. There was a line of mud pellets along the top of the wall for a length of about 12 feet. The ♀ shook her beak vigorously to help in getting rid of the mud. She was watched working hard for nearly 20 minutes and then she went off to have a rest. The ♂ sat near by and chattered encouragement. From time to time, occasionally while the ♀ was still inside, he entered the hole to see how the work was progressing. When the ♀ finally departed he sat scolding for a while endeavouring to get her to return. Then he went off and came back with a piece of green grass which he took into the hole and left there. Lack of time prevented further observations being made.

Comments on the geographical variation in Carols' Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus caroli* (Sharpe) in southern Africa

by W. J. LAWSON

Received 13th April, 1961

Within the southern African sub-continental limits three races of this small tit are recognised, these being *A. c. caroli* (Sharpe) 1871: Ovaquenyama, Ovamboland, South West Africa, *A. c. hellmayri* Roberts 1914: Mapagone, north-eastern Transvaal, and *A. c. robertsi* Haagner 1909: Villa Pereira, Boror, Mocambique. (*vide* McLachlan & Liversidge, *Roberts' Birds of South Africa* 1957, p. 281.) As a result of a recent re-assessment of the geographical variation in *Anthoscopus caroli* conducted at the Durban Museum, it would appear as if the characters and distributions of the races as stated in the above reference are inadequate and in need of adjustment.

A. c. caroli (Sharpe) is discernible from the other austral races in southern Africa on the basis of a greyish suffusion on the chest, and a restriction of the buff of the underparts to the abdomen, with no extension of this colour onto the breast. This buff colouration corresponds with the Cream Buff of Ridgway, (*Color Standards and Color Nomenclature* 1912, Pl. XXX). The measurements of sixteen specimens attributable to this race are—6♂♂ wing 53.0–55.0 (54.1), tail 29.0–31.5 (30.2) and 10♀♀ wing 52.0–56.0 (53.8), tail 28.0–31.0 (29.4) mm. *A. c. caroli* occurs in northern South West Africa, southern Angola?, the Caprivi Strip, northern Bechuanaland Protectorate, and the western and central districts of Southern Rhodesia. This distribution is in accordance with that stated by Smithers *et. al* *Check List of the Birds of Southern Rhodesia* 1957, p. 137. For this study nineteen specimens of this race have been examined from western and southern Southern Rhodesia (16) and Bechuanaland Protectorate (3).

In Natal (where it is uncommon), Zululand, eastern and northern Transvaal, north to the south-eastern areas of Southern Rhodesia occurs a markedly different form of *A. caroli* to which the name *A. c. hellmayri* Roberts is applicable. This race is characterised by the buff of the abdomen being appreciably darker than it is in the nominate race, being about Chamois (Pl. XXX), which in this case extends onto the breast.